

Lifting of leverets – an international problem

Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre reported recently that its northwest facility had received 15 leverets within a week from well meaning people who had found them alone and believed they were orphans. The message is clear – anything found in the field looking superficially like a young rabbit should be not be disturbed as it is probably a hare and its mother will return at dusk to feed it. However, the Centre says that if the leveret is clearly in immediate danger, for example from farm machinery, then it is permissible to move it a distance of 50 metres from its original location. The mother will then call her offspring and some authorities say she uses ultrasound which cannot be heard by predators. Please take any opportunity to spread the message.

League Against Cruel Sports snares campaign

According to a Government report in 2012 a shocking 33% of animals caught in snares are hares. This means that hundreds of thousands of hares per year can legally suffer up to 24 hours of terror as they thrash around in a desperate bid to escape. Defra does have a code of practice recommending that snares are inspected every 12 hours, but this is still totally inadequate and experience shows that even the present statutory inspection period is widely ignored. The UK is one of only five European countries where snaring is still legal, so please help to stamp out this barbaric practice by taking action at the following website where you will also find a lovely picture of a hare: www.thepetitionsite.com/en-gb/takeaction/381/257/671/

Mockery of Government pledge to protect the countryside

New homes are eroding the green belt at the fastest rate for 20 years according to a recent report in the Guardian. The number of houses planned for the green belt has risen to 275,000, which is 200,000 more than four years ago. The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England says that the number of planned homes on the green belt has increased by 55,000 in one year. This is bound to affect hare habitat, the loss of which is probably the most important reason for the 75% national population decline since the 1960s. The Government should do more to address the root causes of the housing shortage such as the cult of throw-away marriages.

RSPB complaint to the EC.

The RSPB is in process of making a formal complaint to the EC alleging that Natural England has made a bad application of the EU Habitats Directive 1992 regarding the burning of blanket bog on Walshaw Moor in the South Pennines, preventing regeneration of the habitat and its dependent species. This gives us an excellent cue to take similar action should the Scottish Government fail to confer a Special Protection Order on the mountain hare, since appeals for “voluntary restraint” on shooting have clearly been ignored during the past year.

Green Party adopts robust stance on wildlife protection

The Green Party's recent Harrogate Spring Conference was host to the first meeting of its brand new Green Party Wildlife and Habitats working group. The Party believes that current legislation has too many conflicts and loopholes. For example, it points out that it is a crime to release non-native species into the wild, yet nearly 50 million non-native game birds are released into our environment annually. The brown hare is a Priority Species for Conservation and has its own BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) but has no shooting close season. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes it an offence to knowingly cause an animal to suffer, yet the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 allows snaring in Great Britain. We are asked to spot the common theme. All three loopholes do seem to benefit the hunting and shooting industry, so our goal, must be to create Wildlife and Habitat policy that benefits all wildlife and all people, not just a select few.

Mountain hares in the Peak District

We have been contacted by a conservation biologist, Carl Bedson who is based in the area and planning a PhD study. This will employ many of the techniques which we will be using for our project to re-introduce mountain hares to Dartmoor, such as radio-tracking and we greatly look forward to working closely with Carl as the two projects progress.